

Statistics on Road
Freight

*Department for
Transport*

Statistics on Road Freight

July 2009

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About the UK Statistics Authority

The UK Statistics Authority is an independent body operating at arm's length from government as a non-ministerial department, directly accountable to Parliament. It was established on 1 April 2008 by the *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007*.

The UK Statistics Authority's overall objective is to promote and safeguard the production and publication of official statistics that serve the public good. The Statistics Authority is also required to promote and safeguard the quality and comprehensiveness of official statistics, and good practice in relation to official statistics.

The Statistics Authority has two main functions:

1. oversight of the Office for National Statistics (ONS) – the executive office of the Authority
2. independent scrutiny (monitoring and assessment) of all official statistics produced in the UK

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ASSESSMENT AND DESIGNATION

Under the provisions of the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007, the UK Statistics Authority has a statutory function to assess sets of statistics against the Code of Practice for Official Statistics, with a view to determining whether it is appropriate for the statistics to be designated, or to retain their designation, as National Statistics.

Designation as National Statistics means that the statistics are deemed to be compliant with the Code of Practice. Whilst the Code is wide-ranging, designation may be broadly interpreted to mean that: the statistics meet identified user needs; are produced, managed and disseminated to high standards; and are well explained.

Assessment reports will not normally comment further, for example on the validity of the statistics as a social or economic measure; though reports may point to such questions if the Authority believes that further research would be desirable.

Designation as National Statistics will sometimes be granted in cases where some changes still need to be made to meet fully the requirements of the Code, on condition that steps are taken by the producer body, within a stated timeframe, to address the weaknesses. This is to avoid public confusion and does not reduce the obligation to comply with the Code.

Designation is granted on the basis of the information provided to the Statistics Authority, primarily by the organisation that produces the statistics. The information includes a range of factual evidence and also assurances by senior statisticians in the producer organisation. The views of users are also sought. Should further information come to light subsequently which changes the Authority's analysis, the Assessment report may be withdrawn and revised as necessary.

Once designated as National Statistics, it is a statutory requirement on the producer organisation to ensure that the set of statistics continues to be produced in compliance with the Code of Practice.

1 Introduction

1.1 This is one of a series of reports prepared under the provisions of Section 14 of the *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007*¹. The report covers most of the road freight statistics produced by the Department for Transport (DfT). These statistics contain information about the domestic and international activity of goods vehicles registered in Great Britain or the UK; and the activity of foreign-registered goods vehicles in Great Britain.

1.2 The statistical outputs included within this assessment are:

Road Goods Vehicles Travelling to Mainland Europe – quarterly series and annual bulletin

These publications cover UK and foreign-registered goods vehicles leaving Great Britain via ferry or through the channel tunnel. DfT compiles the statistics from quarterly returns from roll-on/roll-off ferry operators and from monthly information supplied by Eurotunnel.

Survey of Foreign Vehicle Activity in Great Britain

This publication was based on a DfT survey of foreign-registered heavy goods vehicles leaving Great Britain from a number of ports and truck stops in 2003. DfT is repeating the survey in 2009.

Road Freight Statistics

This is an annual compendium publication which currently (2007 edition) covers the following:

- domestic activity of GB-registered goods vehicles in Great Britain – using data from the Continuing Survey of Road Goods Transport (CSRGT);
- the international activity of UK-registered goods vehicles – using data from the Roll-on Roll-off Enquiry and the International Road Haulage Survey (IRHS);
- the activity of foreign-registered goods vehicles in Great Britain – using data from the Roll-on Roll-off Enquiry and data compiled by Eurostat;
- a short section on the van sector, comprising road traffic and licensing information, and signposts to surveys of privately and company owned vans carried out between 2003 and 2005;

¹ http://www.opsi.gov.uk/Acts/acts2007/pga/ukpga_20070018_en.pdf

- related statistics on goods vehicles, road haulage operators and drivers. These derive from the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA); the Vehicle and Operators Service Agency (VOSA); the Traffic Commissioners; and the Office for National Statistics (ONS). The geographical coverage is Great Britain, apart from the ONS statistics (United Kingdom);
- related statistics on the environment (fuel consumption, greenhouse gas emissions) and safety (accidents, casualties and industrial injuries), compiled by DfT, ONS and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). The DfT and HSE statistics cover Great Britain, the ONS statistics the UK.

1.3 This assessment includes a compendium publication. Assessments of such publications against the Code of Practice relate to the processes involved in preparing the publication, rather than in producing the statistics that are included. Those sets of statistics will normally be subject to separate assessment. Designation of a compendium publication as National Statistics therefore means that the producer body has, for example: identified and met user needs in terms of the content of the publication; considered the appropriateness of each series for inclusion; and written appropriate commentary.

1.4 The Statistics Authority will be inviting comments on both the process for assessment and the presentation of the report with a view to further development of the arrangements in the coming months. The forward programme of Assessments is at <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/programme-of-assessment/index.html> and further information on the principles and procedures for assessment is at <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/principles---procedures/index.html>.

1.5 The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

Section 2 Summary of findings, highlighting the main strengths and weaknesses in relation to the Code of Practice. This summary includes the UK Statistics Authority's recommendation in relation to designation as National Statistics.

Section 3 Subject of the assessment, an overview of the statistics and their history.

Section 4 Detailed assessment, providing more details about the assessment of compliance against each principle and protocol of the Code of Practice.

Annex 1 Suggestions for improvement

Annex 2 Summary of the assessment process and users' views.

1.6 This report was prepared by the Authority's Assessment Team, and approved by the Board of the Statistics Authority on the advice of the Head of Assessment.

2 Summary of findings

2.1 Recommendation for designation as National Statistics

- 2.1.1 The Statistics Authority confirms that the statistics published in *Road Goods Vehicles Travelling to Mainland Europe* (quarterly series and annual bulletin), the *Survey of Foreign Vehicle Activity in Great Britain*, and *Road Freight Statistics* (see 1.2 above) are designated as National Statistics, subject to the implementation of the enhancements listed in section 2.4 below by September 2009.
- 2.1.2 Designation as National Statistics means that the statistics are deemed to be compliant with the Code of Practice, and thus that they meet identified user needs; are produced, managed and disseminated to high standards; and are well explained.
- 2.1.3 Designation also signifies that, subject to any caveats in this report, the Statistics Authority judges that the statistics are readily accessible, produced according to sound methods and managed impartially and objectively in the public interest.

2.2 Summary of strengths and weaknesses

- 2.2.1 DfT documented user needs for road freight statistics during a National Statistics Quality Review in 2004 and has implemented most of the recommendations from that review. However, it could do more to update users about the outcome of this work and - given the time that has now elapsed - to consult more proactively about plans for the future. There is a guide to sources of information on the DfT website and users of the statistics find the statisticians very helpful when contacted.
- 2.2.2 The commentary in the statistical reports is impartial, accessible and well-presented, and is supported by clear metadata and contact information. The reports would, however, benefit from the inclusion of factual information about the policy and operational context, and from more information about the limitations of the data and the reasons for discrepancies with other data sources.
- 2.2.3 At the time of the assessment there were some problems with the speed of processing data, following the recent transfer of coding work to a new team. This was resulting in some delays in publishing the annual volume and in providing data to Eurostat. DfT was taking reasonable steps to minimise disruption and was diverting resources to support the new team.

2.3 Detailed recommendations

- 2.3.1 The Assessment Team identified some areas where it was felt that DfT could strengthen its compliance with the Code. Those which the Assessment team considers essential to enable re-designation as National Statistics are listed in section 2.4. Other suggestions, which would improve the statistics and the

service provided to users but which are not central to their designation, are listed at annex 1.

2.4 Requirements for re-designation as National Statistics

- | | |
|----------------------|--|
| Requirement 1 | Publish a plan for engaging with users, and document their needs (para 4.2) |
| Requirement 2 | Provide more information in each publication about data quality, commenting on possible sources of bias and on inconsistencies with other data sources (paras 4.17 and 4.34) |
| Requirement 3 | Include factual information about the policy or operational context in the annual volume of <i>Road Freight Statistics</i> (para 4.33) |
| Requirement 4 | Undertake to deposit data from the IRHS and foreign vehicles surveys with the relevant national archive, accompanied by appropriate metadata to facilitate their use (para 4.38) |
| Requirement 5 | Publish a Statement of Administrative Sources (para 4.45) |

3 Subject of the assessment

- 3.1 The collection of statistics on road freight is governed by a European regulation and is used to support EU competition policy and regulation of the European market. Within the UK, the Department for Transport, regional bodies, academics and transport consultants use the statistics to obtain a better understanding of the complexities of freight transport and of trends, in order to advise on policy options. The data are fed into models and used in transport planning – for example, measures to reduce congestion - and to support policies on road safety and the environment. They are regarded as an indicator of the performance of the industry and of the wider economy. DfT works with the haulage industry in order to encourage efficiency and best practice. The industry itself has a particular interest in data on the activity of overseas-registered vehicles within the UK.
- 3.2 Statistics have been collected in this area since the 1950s, using powers under the *Statistics of Trade Act 1947* and equivalent legislation in Northern Ireland. The Continuing Survey of Road Goods Transport (Great Britain) (CSRGT) collects information on the domestic activity of GB-registered heavy goods vehicles, using a sample drawn from records held by the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency. The driver or operator of each vehicle completes a log for each journey made over the course of a week.
- 3.3 The International Road Haulage Survey (IRHS) collects information on journeys made by UK registered vehicles travelling to mainland Europe via the channel tunnel or on roll-on roll-off ferries from ports in the North Sea, Dover Strait and English Channel. Hauliers operating internationally are asked to provide details of all trips commencing on specified days.
- 3.4 In addition, the Continuing Survey of Road Goods Transport (Northern Ireland) collects information about the domestic and international activity of NI-registered vehicles, including journeys made across the land border with the Republic. These data are used to provide UK level estimates to Eurostat.
- 3.5 Results from the IRHS are estimated using data from the Roll-on Roll-off (Ro-Ro) Enquiry. This consists of monthly returns from Eurotunnel and quarterly returns from ferry operators, detailing the number of UK and foreign-registered powered vehicles and unaccompanied trailers carried on each route to mainland Europe. Since 1978 this enquiry has collected information on outward traffic only.
- 3.6 A survey of foreign-registered vehicles was carried out in 2003 and is being repeated this year. This is conducted by interviewers based at a number of ports and at the Ashford truck stop, with quotas set by country of registration at each site. Information on journeys within the UK is collected as foreign vehicles leave the country. Data collection is outsourced, but (in contrast to 2003) DfT staff will carry out analysis of the 2009 data.

3.7 DfT conducted a National Statistics Quality Review² of road freight statistics in 2004. This obtained views from users of the data and from data suppliers. The recommendations included:

- additional questions to meet user requirements;
- improved collection of data from Northern Ireland (see para 3.4);
- endorsement of plans for the survey of foreign registered vehicles to supplement the Ro-Ro information (see para 3.6);
- exploration of the potential use of telematics or ITS ('intelligent transport systems') for collecting data (see para 4.4)
- investigation of the apparent under-reporting of vehicle activity (see para 4.17).

3.8 The majority of these recommendations have been implemented - including the CSRGT (NI) and the foreign-registered vehicles survey – but not always reported back to users of the statistics.

² <http://www.ons.gov.uk/about-statistics/methodology-and-quality/quality/nat-stats-qual-revs/qual-revs-by-theme/travel-and-transport/nsqr-series-report-no-30---review-of-road-freight-statistics.doc>

4 Detailed assessment

Principle 1: Meeting user needs

The production, management and dissemination of official statistics should meet the requirements of informed decision-making by government, public services, business, researchers and the public.

- 4.1 DfT statisticians engage with internal policy colleagues, economists and transport modellers through regular meetings. They are actively involved in relevant Eurostat working groups and task forces and attend events and meetings with industry representatives and academics working in the logistics sector. There is a guide to sources of data on the DfT website. The publications contain contact details for further information and users are invited to provide feedback on the content. Users commented to us that the statisticians are very helpful, and responsive to requests for further analysis.
- 4.2 While users were engaged in the 2004 Quality Review, contact with external users has been less proactive since that time, so current needs are less well-documented. There are relevant user groups³ but these have tended to be concerned with wider issues and have not focused to any extent on road freight in recent years. The Assessment team was told by one of the trade bodies that, given the time that has now elapsed, they would be keen to contribute to a new review of the content and reliability of freight data. As part of the re-designation as National Statistics, DfT should publish a plan for engaging with users, and document their needs⁴ (Requirement 1).
- 4.3 Statisticians have taken a view on what is practicable and value for money, taking account of policy requirements and EU Regulations. This means, for example, that although there is user demand for more information about the activity of light goods vehicles (which is growing faster than the HGV sector) DfT has only undertaken a baseline survey. The survey obtained information on the characteristics of the van sector but did not collect journey information. This decision is based on the difficulties encountered during previous attempts to collect journey details from the LGV sector, which have led DfT statisticians to conclude that a new survey would not be cost-effective.
- 4.4 DfT has implemented most of the changes recommended by the Quality Review, including the introduction of new surveys to capture the activity of foreign and Northern Ireland-registered vehicles. It has investigated the possibility of using telematic methods of data capture (eg GPS or odometer readings), but does not regard this as feasible in the foreseeable future.
- 4.5 The results of these investigations and hence the basis for taking decisions on LGVs and telematics have not been communicated on the website.

³ Principally the Transport Statistics User Group, but the Ro-Ro Enquiry falls within the scope of the Maritime Statistics Advisory Group.

⁴ In relation to Principle 1 Practices 1, 2 and 5 and Protocol 1 of the Code of Practice

4.6 DfT publishes its statistical reports according to a well-established timetable and the comments we received from users did not suggest dissatisfaction with the frequency with which it releases data. Users also appeared generally satisfied with the format of reports, although some had reservations about data quality because of inconsistencies with other sources (see also para 4.17). There have been some problems with the quality and timeliness of the datasets supplied to Eurostat.

Principle 2: Impartiality and objectivity

Official statistics, and information about statistical processes, should be managed impartially and objectively.

- 4.7 Publications are pre-announced on the National Statistics Publication Hub and are released in an orderly manner. They are available free of charge, and no charge is usually made for supplementary data or analysis.
- 4.8 DfT describes methodological changes in the relevant publication, although in the past such changes have not always been announced in advance.
- 4.9 DfT has a published policy on revisions. Changes resulting from a re-validation of previously published road freight data are flagged on the website. We think it would be helpful to users to provide a slightly more detailed explanation of recent revisions to Ro-Ro data, as these were fairly substantial. DfT statisticians suspended this series while they carried out a thorough investigation, and they are confident that the revised figures are robust. We think users would be reassured by more information about the reasons for these revisions and the steps taken to prevent a recurrence.
- 4.10 The commentary in statistical reports appears impartial and objective and we received no criticisms from users about it.

Principle 3: Integrity

At all stages in the production, management and dissemination of official statistics, the public interest should prevail over organisational, political or personal interests.

- 4.11 DfT has informed us that there have been no political or other pressures that would undermine the integrity of these statistics, and that no statements or comments have been issued to the press prior to publication. We have seen no indication that the timing or content of the statistics have been influenced by such pressures.
- 4.12 European guidelines are followed. DfT has told us that much of the content of the European Regulation is in line with its practices.
- 4.13 DfT has informed us that they have received no complaints about professional integrity, quality or standards and that there have been no instances of individuals abusing trust for personal gain.

Principle 4: Sound methods and assured quality

Statistical methods should be consistent with scientific principles and internationally recognised best practices, and be fully documented. Quality should be monitored and assured taking account of internationally agreed practices.

- 4.14 The methods used in the continuing surveys and the Ro-Ro Enquiry were reviewed by internal and external experts as part of the 2004 Quality Review and found to be generally sound. DfT has informed us that it complies with the standards set out in the EU Regulation, although there have been some delays in delivering data and some revisions.
- 4.15 Alternative methods of data collection have been explored (para 4.4). However, the statistical publications would benefit from more explanation as to why particular choices have been made. This also applies to the use of quota sampling in the foreign vehicle survey.
- 4.16 Users are informed about response rates and sampling errors in the freight surveys. Less information is provided about the extent of missing data in the Ro-Ro Enquiry. The revisions referred to in para 4.9 resulted in part from incorrect assumptions in imputing missing data. DfT has assured us that very little imputation is now required because compliance has been made compulsory and issues have been resolved through detailed discussions with the ferry companies concerned.
- 4.17 The Quality Review drew attention to discrepancies between data from the road freight surveys and DfT traffic count data, and this issue was also raised with us by some users. There are a number of contributory factors. For example, an automatic traffic count is often unable to distinguish between vehicles used for haulage purposes and other large vehicles. The freight surveys, on the other hand, rely on drivers or operators keeping an accurate diary of journeys: under-counting seems inherently more likely than over-counting. We understand that DfT has made some progress in investigating these discrepancies and we think that, as part of the re-designation as National Statistics, users should be told about these findings⁵ (Requirement 2).
- 4.18 Users have been alerted to possible discontinuities in time series arising from changes in methods and IT systems, and revised series have been produced following investigation and resolution of the errors in the RoRo series.

⁵ In relation to Principle 4 Practice 2 and Principle 8 Practice 1 of the Code of Practice

Principle 5: Confidentiality

Private information about individual persons (including bodies corporate) compiled in the production of official statistics is confidential, and should be used for statistical purposes only.

- 4.19 Some of the data collected in the road freight surveys could be considered as personal (for example in the case of lone operators) but the main risk is probably to commercial sensitivities. Such risks may arise when anonymised data are made available in sufficient detail to make it possible to discover the activity of individual firms.
- 4.20 DfT does not publish any formal statement about how this kind of disclosure risk is avoided, either at departmental level or for these particular statistics. However, DfT has assured us that it takes a thorough (if pragmatic) approach. Estimates based on too few records are suppressed in order to ensure that no commercial business can be identified from the aggregate data.
- 4.21 There is a confidentiality assurance on the foreign vehicle survey form (which is administered by an interviewer) but no similar statement on the CSRGT and IRHS forms.
- 4.22 DfT prefers that access to confidential record-level data is only available at its offices, in order to maintain the security of the data. Although it has end-user licences that impose the usual restrictions on the use, storage and disposal of data, there appears to be some reluctance to use this facility. We suggest that DfT considers making more use of licences and provides details of data access arrangements on its website.

Principle 6: Proportionate burden

The cost burden on data suppliers should not be excessive and should be assessed relative to the benefits arising from the use of the statistics.

- 4.23 Compliance costs for CSRGT and IRHS were published in the report of the 2004 Quality Review and are available for 2006/07 on the DfT website. DfT takes steps to ensure that smaller firms, in particular, are not over-sampled and subjected to an undue burden. Alternative ways of obtaining data have been investigated (para 4.4) and modelling of data within the department helps to avoid placing additional burdens on data suppliers.
- 4.24 Industry representatives did not raise supplier burden as a major issue in their comments to us. They mentioned that implementation of changes to the forms following the Quality Review had helped to improve clarity and reduce the burden.
- 4.25 High rates of participation in IRHS, CSRGT and now the Ro-Ro Enquiry are achieved through the use of long-standing statutory powers. While this should not be seen as preferable to informed consent, it seems likely that the volume and quality of data would decline without the statutory powers. DfT considers that – with the possible exception of start-up firms – individual hauliers have relatively little use for the aggregate statistics and are therefore unlikely to be motivated by self-interest.
- 4.26 Some additional data are extracted from the DVLA and VOSA databases which are also used as sample frames for the road freight surveys. In the case of DVLA, which is not a public database, the extraction of additional information has been balanced against confidentiality considerations.
- 4.27 Compliance costs were taken into account in deciding whether to continue with the LGV surveys.

Principle 7: Resources

The resources made available for statistical activities should be sufficient to meet the requirements of this Code and should be used efficiently and effectively.

- 4.28 DfT has informed us that business planning covers statistical work as a whole, so resources for road freight are considered in relation to other transport issues. Priority is given to European and other statutory requirements, monitoring of PSA targets and policy priorities.
- 4.29 Changes to existing surveys and proposals for new data are balanced against the additional costs and other priorities, in order to ensure value for money.
- 4.30 Some resources have to be negotiated with other directorates: in general, it is easier to obtain resources for ad hoc surveys than for enhancements to the continuing surveys. This constrains the possibilities for enhancing the latter surveys in ways that were noted in the Quality Review and raised with us by users - in particular, increasing the sample to permit more analysis of local areas and trends; or adding an additional question about land use at the point of origin and destination.
- 4.31 Statistical staff are recruited using the GSS competency framework and undergo continuing professional development. At the time of the assessment, coding of the survey forms, which appears to be relatively labour-intensive, had recently been moved from Bristol to Hastings. The new team was much less experienced and although the handover was carefully planned, the throughput of forms was much reduced and was likely to delay publication of the annual volume of freight statistics. In addition to addressing the volume issue, DfT statisticians informed us about the steps they were taking to check that the quality of the data was unaffected. If the problem persists, we suggest they might wish to seek advice or assistance from other agencies that code data of this nature, and possibly investigate the out-sourcing of the work.

Principle 8: Frankness and accessibility

Official statistics, accompanied by full and frank commentary, should be readily accessible for all users.

- 4.32 The published statistics are well-presented and accompanied by helpful metadata - including response rates, sampling errors, survey forms and a description of the data collection process. We think it would be helpful to users to include the IRHS and Ro-Ro data collection instruments in the annual volume of freight statistics and to describe the methodology for these surveys in a little more detail.
- 4.33 The commentary in the publications is clear and assists interpretation of the data. However, it could be strengthened. As part of the re-designation as National Statistics, factual information should be added about the policy or operational context⁶ (Requirement 3), in order to make it clear to readers why the statistics are collected and the uses to which they are put, and to enable DfT to comment on their quality and reliability in relation to those uses.
- 4.34 There are some discrepancies between road freight and traffic count data (para 4.17). We think DfT should refer to these issues in the annual publication of freight statistics and indicate the extent to which they have been resolved (see Requirement 2, para 4.17). DfT might consider publishing a methodological paper on the work that has been done to date.
- 4.35 The annual volume is a compendium publication that includes relevant data from other sources, including Eurostat and other government departments and agencies. This holistic approach to the topic area is helpful. The tables for these other sources carry contact details, but it might be helpful to include some basic background information or signposting (so that readers can obtain further information about these other sources of data), and to indicate if there are any major limitations or 'health warnings'.
- 4.36 The statistics on the DfT website are easy to access and navigate and the tables are also available in Excel format. Road freight statistics are signposted from the UK statistics publication hub, where there is also useful background information. Hard copies are supplied on request.
- 4.37 DfT prepares a dataset in the format required by Eurostat and a set of aggregate statistics for staff in the Devolved Administrations. Microdata are available to academics or transport consultancies via an end-user licence (see also para 4.22).

⁶ In relation to Principle 8 Practice 2 of the Code of Practice

4.38 Although CSRGT data are lodged with the National Digital Archive of Datasets (NDAD), the most recent data identified on the NDAD website are for 2003. DfT told us there have been difficulties negotiating the transfer of more recent data because of security issues while the data are in transit. There is also a 30 year restriction on access to the data because of the presence of a vehicle registration variable. DfT may wish to review whether the length of this embargo and/or the presence of the registration data are strictly necessary. As part of the re-designation as National Statistics, data from the IRHS and the foreign vehicles surveys should be deposited with an appropriate national archive, along with suitable metadata to facilitate their use⁷ (Requirement 4).

⁷ In relation to Principle 8 Practice 7 of the Code of Practice

Protocol 1: User engagement

Effective user engagement is fundamental both to trust in statistics and securing maximum public value. This Protocol draws together the relevant practices set out elsewhere in the Code and expands on the requirements in relation to consultation.

- 4.39 Comments on this Protocol should be read in conjunction with the comments on Principle 1.
- 4.40 DfT maintains a list of known users of the statistics. This list is mainly held to alert users when the statistics are published, although it was used to obtain feedback during the 2004 Quality Review. The publications themselves contain full contact details for further information and comment, and comments supplied to us by users confirm that they find the DfT statisticians very helpful.

Protocol 2: Release practices

Statistical reports should be released into the public domain in an orderly manner that promotes public confidence and gives equal access to all, subject to relevant legislation.

- 4.41 Release practices follow the requirements of the Code of Practice. Statistical reports are released via the Publication Hub according to a pre-announced timetable and carry the name of the responsible statistician. Pre-release access lists are published on the DfT website and DfT has informed us that there have been no instances of the premature release of data.
- 4.42 Publication of the 2008 volume of road freight statistics is likely to be delayed for the reasons outlined in para 4.31. The Code requires that DfT draws public attention to this change and provides a full explanation of the reasons, once the delay is confirmed.
- 4.43 DfT has informed us that if ministerial or policy statements relating to the statistics are made, they are always released separately from the statistical releases; the requirements in the Code about separating the two types of release are therefore met.

Protocol 3: The use of administrative sources for statistical purposes

Administrative sources should be fully exploited for statistical purposes, subject to adherence to appropriate safeguards.

- 4.44 The primary use of administrative data in the production of road freight statistics is to provide sample frames for the surveys, but the statisticians have extracted some additional information about each sample unit. This avoids duplication when information is requested from survey participants.
- 4.45 DfT should publish a Statement of Administrative Sources as part of the re-designation as National Statistics⁸ (Requirement 5).

⁸ In relation to Protocol 3 Practice 5

Annex 1: Suggestions for improvement

A1.1 This annex includes some suggestions for improvement to DfT's road freight outputs, in the interests of the public good. These are not formally required for re-designation, but the Assessment team considers that their implementation will improve public confidence in the production, management and dissemination of official statistics.

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| Suggestion 1 | Inform users about actions taken since the 2004 Quality Review. Include an explanation of decisions about the van sector (paras 4.3-4.5) |
| Suggestion 2 | Provide a little more detail as to why revisions to the Ro-Ro figures were needed and the steps that have been taken to prevent a recurrence (para 4.9) |
| Suggestion 3 | Include brief explanations as to why particular choices were made when writing up methodological details for publications (para 4.15) |
| Suggestion 4 | Consider whether to add a confidentiality statement to the CSRGT and IRHS survey forms (para 4.21) |
| Suggestion 5 | Make active use of end user licences for disclosive data where possible and provide details of data access arrangements on the website (para 4.22) |
| Suggestion 6 | Publish annually the estimated costs of compliance with freight surveys (para 4.23) |
| Suggestion 7 | Consider seeking advice or assistance from other agencies if current coding problems persist (para 4.31) |
| Suggestion 8 | Include the IRHS and Ro-Ro forms in the annual volume of freight statistics and describe the methodology for these data collections (para 4.32) |
| Suggestion 9 | Consider publishing a methodological paper on the discrepancies between freight statistics and other data sources (para 4.34) |
| Suggestion 10 | Provide a brief description of the main external data sources used in the annual volume of freight statistics (noting any major limitations) and point readers to further information (para 4.35) |
| Suggestion 11 | Review whether CSRGT datasets could be anonymised and re-deposited with NDAD without the current embargo (para 4.38) |

Annex 2: Summary of assessment process and users' views

A2.1 This assessment was conducted from April to June 2009.

A2.2 The Assessment team met representatives of DfT at an initial meeting in April. DfT provided background information and draft Written Evidence for Assessment during April to June. The Team met DfT representatives at their headquarters in London on 11 June, in order to confirm and clarify the written evidence. This was provided in its final form on 17 June 2009.

Summary of users contacted, and issues raised

A2.3 As part of the assessment, questionnaires were sent to 62 users and other interested parties. We received 17 responses, grouped as follows:

Internal DfT	4
Other government departments and agencies	4
Devolved administrations	2
Local/regional transport operator	1
Trade bodies	1
Transport consultancies	2
International	1
Academic	1
Professional body/learned society	1

A2.4 In general, users were satisfied with the statistics, with some exceptions in respect of timeliness, level of detail, quality and comparability. There were several comments about the limited possibilities for regional, sub-regional or trend analysis because of sample size, although users understood the reasons for this. One person made a strong case for the recording of land use information, which was an issue raised during the 2004 Quality Review. Several drew attention to discrepancies with other data sources (eg DfT traffic counts) highlighting vehicle-km figures and fuel consumption.

A2.5 There were no criticisms in relation to accessibility, ease of finding information, presentation, commentary or metadata.

Key documents/links provided

Written Evidence for Assessment document

Road Freight Statistics (annual volume)

<http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/statistics/datatablespublications/freight/goodsbyroad/>

Road Goods Vehicles Travelling to Mainland Europe (quarterly series and annual bulletin)

<http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/statistics/datatablespublications/freight/secroadseur/>

Survey of Foreign Vehicle Activity in Great Britain

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